

# INDIANA CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD

## Pre-Opening Site Visit Guidance

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*For Charter Schools Authorized by  
the Indiana Charter School Board*

September 2012

For more information, please visit the  
Indiana Charter School Board website:

<http://www.in.gov/icsb>

## Pre-Opening Site Visit Guidance for New Charter Schools

### Overview

The Indiana Charter School Board (“ICSB”) is committed to working with the leadership of each newly authorized charter school to ensure the realization of the high performing school articulated during the application process. A charter school’s ability to achieve its vision and mission depends a great deal upon what happens before the doors of the school ever open. Some of the most complicated tasks occur during a charter school’s pre-operational planning period.

In accordance with Exhibit D of the Charter Agreement, ICSB staff members will visit the Charter School Building for an inspection and review prior to the time that the Charter School is scheduled to commence instruction (the “**Pre-Opening Site Visit**”). The Pre-Opening Site Visit will occur, at the earliest, fifteen days prior to such date. The Pre-Opening Site Visit will be guided by the Prior Action Checklist as set forth in Exhibit D of the Charter Agreement.

Pursuant to Paragraph 2.3 of the Charter Agreement, the Organizer has agreed that it shall not provide instruction to any student attending the Charter School until and unless: (a) the Organizer issues a written statement to the Executive Director, attesting to the Organizer’s completion in a timely manner, of all Prior Actions, and (b) the Executive Director shall have confirmed in writing the completion of such Prior Actions (referred to as the “**Prior Action Completion Letter**”). The Pre-Opening Site Visit will allow the school to demonstrate the work that has been done to prepare for a successful school opening and will also serve as a check-point to ensure that all Prior Actions have been completed.

This document provides guidance to the school in preparation for the Pre-Opening Site Visit.

### Prior Actions Check-In Conference Call

Approximately 6 months prior to the first day of school, the ICSB will hold a conference call with the school’s Board Chair, School Leader (if identified), Start-Up Coordinator, and Educational Management Organization (EMO) Representative (if applicable). During the call, ICSB staff will walk through the Prior Action Checklist and describe the specific requirements for completing each Prior Action. In addition, ICSB staff will ask the Board Chair or Start-Up Coordinator to provide a status update on the school’s facility, insurance coverage, and start-up funding. During this call, the date of the Pre-Opening Site Visit will be scheduled.

### Site Visit Overview Conference Call

The ICSB will hold a conference call with the school’s Board Chair, School Leader, Start-Up Coordinator and EMO Representative (if applicable) approximately 1 month in advance of the Pre-Opening Site Visit to provide detailed guidance for the site visit and to address any questions or concerns that the school might have. During the call, ICSB staff will ask the school to provide a status update on the completion of each item listed in the Prior Action Checklist. In addition, ICSB staff will confirm the date, time and location for the Pre-Opening Site Visit. This will enable ICSB staff to better prepare for the Pre-Opening Site Visit and will reduce the time needed for the visit.

### Prior Action Checklist

The Prior Actions consist of seven areas of critical importance to school success: Governance and Management; Staffing; Curriculum and Instruction; Students and Parents; Operations; Finance; and Facilities, Fixtures, & Equipment. In order to receive final approval from the ICSB to open its doors, the school must demonstrate its satisfactory completion of each Prior Action item. The deliverables for each of the seven areas are described in the Prior Action Checklist, which is included in this document as **Appendix A**. The ICSB requests that all documentation described in the Prior Action Checklist be emailed to ICSB staff **10-14 days prior** to the Pre-Opening Site Visit. This will enable ICSB staff to review the documentation and identify any potential issues in advance of the visit.



## **Pre-Opening Site Visit**

### *Attendees*

The following persons must attend the Pre-Opening Site Visit meeting:

- Board Chair
- Financial Manager
- School Leader
- Operations/Business Manager or Start-up Coordinator
- (If applicable) Representatives from the Educational Management Organization (EMO)
- ICSB representatives

Additional Board members are welcome to attend; however, please be aware of Open Door Law requirements with respect to quorum.

### *Location and Format*

The Pre-Opening Site Visit will be held at the school site and will commence with a tour of the school facility followed by an opportunity for the school to demonstrate how the Prior Actions have been met. The final portion of the meeting will be reserved for discussion of the school's progress. A Pre-Opening Site Visit will typically take one or two hours.

## **Prior Action Completion Letter**

The school must submit a letter of assurance to the ICSB, signed by the Board Chair and School Leader, stating that it has completed all of the Prior Actions. This letter may be delivered in person to ICSB staff at the time of the Pre-Opening Site Visit. See **Appendix B** for a sample letter of assurances.

After the Site Visit, the ICSB will issue a Prior Action Completion Letter if the school meets all of the criteria specified within the Prior Action Checklist. **Schools that have not completed all Prior Actions may be required to delay opening, potentially to the following school year.**

Pursuant to Paragraph 15.5c of the Charter Agreement, the ICSB reserves the right to terminate the charter at the time of the Pre-Opening Site Visit if it is clear that significant deficiencies exist which lead ICSB to question the viability of the school. Such revocation is subject to the notice and cure provisions set forth under Paragraph 15.6 of the Charter Agreement.

Appendix A  
Prior Action Checklist

Indiana Charter School Board  
Charter School Prior Action Checklist

I. Governance and Management

Item	Area of Review	Deliverable	Status and Follow-Up Actions	Date Completed
1	Board of Directors is actively governing the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List of current members of the school's Board of Directors, including resumes with contact information. You may use the template provided in Appendix C to complete this requirement.</li> <li>Meeting minutes from one Board meeting within the last 60 days preceding the Pre-Opening Site Visit.</li> </ul>		
2	Permanent head of school has been named.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Written notice that the head of school has been named should be provided to ICSB staff within five days of the hire date. Notice should include copy of head of school's resume.</li> </ul>		
3	Other key leadership roles in the school are filled.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Updated organizational chart or staffing plan with names of specific individuals occupying key leadership roles at the school. <b>NOTE:</b> Documentation may overlap with Item 9 below.</li> </ul>		
4	Expanded background checks completed for all Board members and the school leadership (IC § 20-26-5-10).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expanded background check results for Board members, members of any subcommittee or board to which the Organizer has delegated some authority regarding the charter school, and school leadership are on file.</li> <li><b>NOTE:</b> for the duration of the school's operation, these background checks must be completed 14 days prior to the approval of any new Board members or staff.</li> </ul>		
5	By-laws have been ratified.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Copy of ratified by-laws or a board resolution approving by-laws.</li> </ul>		
6	<i>If applicable:</i> Management contract with the Educational Management Organization (EMO) has been executed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Copy of executed management contract <b>approved by the Indiana Charter School Board</b> and signed by representatives of management company and school's Board of Directors.</li> </ul>		
7	Determination of tax-exempt status from the IRS has been received.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Copy of letter from the IRS documenting the tax-exempt status and tax identification number.</li> </ul>		
8	Names of Board of Directors have been listed on school website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Board member names have been added to the school's website, per Indiana statute.</li> </ul>		

## II. Staffing

Item	Area of Review	Deliverable	Status and Follow-Up Actions	Date Completed
9	The number of teachers is adequate and their assignments match the staffing plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Written staffing plan outlining number of teaching staff by grade level, subject area, and title, as well as all administrative positions. <b>NOTE:</b> Documentation may overlap with Item 3 above.</li> </ul>		
<b>Target Completion: 1 month prior to the school's first day of student attendance</b>				
10	Teaching staff comply with Indiana charter school licensing requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Copies of valid Indiana teacher's licenses listing certification areas; or</li> <li>Proof that an individual is in the process of obtaining such license; or</li> <li>Proof that the individual holds at least a bachelor's degree with a grade point average of at least a three (3.0) on a four (4.0) point scale from an accredited postsecondary educational institution in the content or related area in which the individual teaches; and</li> <li>Proof of compliance with any statutory exemptions.</li> </ul>		
11	Special Education Teacher of Record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Signed contract for special education teaching staff, <b>OR</b> copy of valid Indiana teacher's license for on-staff special education teacher of record</li> </ul>		
12	The school has adequate Special Education and English Language Learner staffing in place to meet the needs of enrolled students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assurance that the school has hired or contracted with certified Special Education staff, speech and language therapists, occupational and physical therapists, and/or any other staff as required to meet the needs of enrolled students. If services will be contracted, the school must provide a copy of the signed contract.</li> <li>Assurance that the school has hired or contracted with qualified English Language Learner staff as required to meet the needs of enrolled students. If services will be contracted, the school must provide a copy of the signed contract.</li> </ul>		
13	Expanded background checks completed for all staff members and volunteers (including parents) who have contact with children (IC § 20-26-5-10).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expanded background check authorizations and results for all staff members and volunteers are on file.</li> <li><b>NOTE:</b> for the duration of the school's operation, these background checks must be completed within 14 days of hiring any new staff or the use of volunteers in school.</li> </ul>		

### III. Curriculum and Instruction

Item	Area of Review	Deliverable	Status and Follow-Up Actions	Date Completed
<b>Target Completion: 1 month prior to the school's first day of student attendance</b>				
13	Needed instructional materials and supplies have been distributed to classrooms at every grade level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classrooms should be adequately prepared for teaching and learning, including the appropriate distribution of curricular materials, computers, and supplies at time of Pre-Opening Site Visit.</li> </ul>		
14	A school calendar and class schedules exist and provisions have been made for them to be available to every student and family.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Copies of the annual school calendar and class schedules.</li> </ul>		
15	The school is prepared to provide instruction in each approved grade and only in such grades.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Class schedule and staffing plan. <b>NOTE:</b> This item may overlap with Items 9 and 14 above.</li> </ul>		

### IV. Students and Parents

Item	Area of Review	Deliverable	Status and Follow-Up Actions	Date Completed
<b>Target Completion: 1 month prior to the school's first day of student attendance</b>				
16	The school has developed required policies related to student discipline (including SPED students), complaints/grievances, FERPA, and Indiana's Public Access Laws, and has made appropriate policies available to students and their families in a Student and Family Handbook.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Copy of Student and Family Handbook containing the specified policies, including suspension and expulsion policies.</li> <li>Copy of required staff procedures, consistent with FERPA, for storage/handling of student files in school. Such procedures should be included in the school's staff training manual or business/ operations handbook.</li> </ul>		
17	Student enrollment procedures have been documented and a student roster is available to teachers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summary of school enrollment statistics including number of currently enrolled students, number of students on the waiting list, and copies of student rosters. Rosters should include school corporations of residence Student Identification Numbers (per IDOE requirements). <b>We suggest for this purpose the most recent Real Time (RT) report from the IDOE's STN Center.</b></li> <li>Copy of student enrollment policies, including a clear description of the following: enrollment deadlines for each semester, what it means for the school to be at</li> </ul>		

		<p>capacity, why any limitations are appropriate, and the procedure and timeline for working through a lottery process if necessary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documents pertaining to any lotteries held.</li> </ul>		
18	Electronic system for maintaining student records has been implemented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence that an electronic data system is in place (information should be easily aggregated and disaggregated by race, gender, school corporation of residence, special education, free/reduced lunch, date of enrollment, date of withdrawal, previous schooling, etc.)</li> </ul>		
19	Student records, including records for students with special needs, have been received or requested.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Written assurance from the school.</li> </ul>		
20	Student academic, attendance, discipline, and test records have been stored in locked cabinets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Locked storage is present at time of Inspection.</li> </ul>		
21	Student health records have been separated from academic records and are in locked storage in the office of the school nurse or other appropriate location.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Written assurance from the school.</li> <li>Copy of school health record procedures. Such procedures should be included in the school's Student and Family Handbook as well as in the school's staff training manual or business/ operations handbook.</li> <li>Locked storage is present at time of Inspection.</li> </ul>		

## V. Operations

Item	Area of Review	Deliverable	Status and Follow-Up Actions	Date Completed
	<b>Target Completion: 1 month prior to the school's first day of student attendance</b>			
22	Arrangements have been made for food service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Copy of food or vendor services contract. Note that the IDOE requires certain vendor selection and contracting requirements. Please plan for a 6-month process.</li> <li>Evidence of appropriate state and local health department inspections and licenses</li> </ul>		
23	Appropriate provisions have been made for supplemental transportation of students if any is to be provided.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Copy of agreement with provider of supplemental transportation services, including any homeless students.</li> <li>Copies of expanded background checks for employees of the supplemental transportation services provider.</li> </ul>		



24	There are written plans for such life safety procedures as fire drills and emergency evacuation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specific, detailed plan for preparing and responding to emergencies are posted in the school at the time of the Pre-Opening Site Visit.</li> <li>Evidence that the Department of Public Works has been contacted and a request has been made for the installation of school zone/speed limit signs</li> </ul>		
25	Provisions have been made for required health services and screenings, including immunization records.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence that health services are available (e.g., school nurse on staff or contract, contract with health care clinic) as required in Indiana administrative code 511 IAC 4-1.5-6.</li> <li>Copies of policies for medication administration.</li> <li>Written plan for providing required health services (e.g., student hearing and vision).</li> <li>Immunization records or proper exemption forms.</li> </ul>		

## VI. Finance

Item	Area of Review	Deliverable	Status and Follow-Up Actions	Date Completed
	<b>Target Completion: Within first 3 months following charter approval</b>			
26	School has established fiscal management and oversight policies and an accounting system with internal controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Copy of the school's fiscal policies and procedures.</li> <li>Evidence of employment of or contract with accountant, bookkeeper or other person to handle such duties.</li> <li>Copy of the Initial Statement adopted by the Board of Directors, per Section 10.4 of the charter agreement.</li> </ul>		
27	A payroll system has been established	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contract with payroll company or evidence of employment of or contract with persons to handle payroll; and copy of deduction policy.</li> </ul>		

## VI. Facilities, Fixtures & Equipment

Item	Area of Review	Deliverable	Status and Follow-Up Actions	Date Completed
	<b>Target Completion: Within first 3 to 6 months following charter approval</b>			
28	School location identified and facility secured and/or in development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Written notice that a location has been identified and a facility has been secured and/or is in development. Notice should include copy of the lease or deed with the physical address of the facility clearly indicated.</li> </ul>		
29	Evidence of insurance coverage as	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certificates of Insurance for all required insurance</li> </ul>		

	stipulated in the charter agreement and required by the Indiana Charter School Board	<p>coverage stipulated by the ICSB and posted on the ICSB website.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verification that insurance company is licensed to do business in Indiana or in another state, if applicable, and is rated an A or better by A.M. BEST rating service.</li> </ul>		
30	Available space (including classrooms, restrooms, and special purpose space) meets the requirements of the program and the number of students enrolled.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspection at time of Pre-Opening Site Visit.</li> </ul>		
31	Space is accessible to all students (including handicapped students), clean, and well-lit. If building is not required to be handicap accessible, procedures for reasonable accommodation of such persons are in place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspection at time of Pre-Opening Site Visit.</li> <li>• Written procedures for reasonable accommodation of handicapped persons.</li> <li>• Require engineer or architect to provide a certification that the building complies as an E occupancy under the rules of the Fire Prevention and Building Safety commission. For existing structures, this might require the engineer or architect to issue a re-certification.</li> </ul>		
32	A certificate of occupancy (or statement of substantial completion) is on file, as well as any other appropriate certificates of inspection or permits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copy of certificate of occupancy or statement of substantial completion.</li> <li>• Permits and certification for zoning.</li> <li>• Permits and certification for land use.</li> <li>• If applicable, state construction design release.</li> <li>• Permits and certification related to building use.</li> <li>• Documentation from the State Department of Health.</li> <li>• Documentation from the county or relevant local Health Department.</li> <li>• Documentation from the State Fire Marshall or local Building Inspector.</li> <li>• If applicable, documentation from the local Fire Department.</li> </ul>		
33	Space is safe and secure; entrance and egress from the school's space is adequately controlled.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspection at time of Pre-Opening Site Visit to ensure safety and evacuation plans in each classroom and school signage are posted.</li> </ul>		

**Appendix B**  
**Sample Letter of Assurance from the School to the ICSB**

[Letter should be written on the organizer's or school's letterhead]

July 30, 2013

Executive Director  
Indiana Charter School Board  
151 W. Ohio St.  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear [insert name of Indiana Charter School Board's Executive Director]:

This letter is to inform you that **[Insert name of organizer]** assures that it will complete each Prior Action item set forth in the Charter Agreement for the **[insert name of school]** by August 2, 2013. We will be fully prepared to open our doors and serve students on August 12, 2013.

Please let us know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

**[Printed Name of Board Chair, and signature]**

**[Printed Name of Principal/School Leader, and signature]**

**Appendix C**  
**Board Contact Information**

Last Name	First Name	Date Seated	Term End Date	Position (ie: chair)	Email Phone	Address	Mtg Dates, Times	Date of next elections
Sample	Susie	May 14, 2012	May 14, 2014	Board Chair	<a href="mailto:susiesample@yahoo.com">susiesample@yahoo.com</a> 317-555-5555	123 N. Meridian, Indianapolis, IN	First Tues., 6:30pm	May 2012